

GERALD G. HODGES

School of Library and Information Science
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

Evaluation and Measurement of Youth Services

The current effort to improve the quality of youth services and to expand these services must be firmly grounded in a meaningful context of evaluation. Evaluation of personnel and measurement and evaluation of program are essential components of any program which is striving for excellence in the delivery of needed services. Every time personnel evaluation is considered, I am reminded of the principal at my first position as a school library media specialist.

He felt that the best methods of evaluating my performance (and, truthfully, my program by extension) was to count the frequency with which I changed the bulletin boards in the library. I suppose you could develop some output measure for this. It was very soon found that students were more adept at this, and soon another measure of performance (and of my program) became the number of students who were involved in library media center activities. The true problem encountered here was that my job description really only evolved—there was never sufficient prior planning between me and the principal for what I intended to accomplish. And this prior planning does appear to be one of the most important components of developing meaningful methods for program and personnel evaluation. If this does not occur, there is the real problem in schools of library media specialists being evaluated on the same basis as classroom teachers, a process which does not fully address all the activities of library media specialists, regardless of how much we teach.

Youth services librarians, regardless of their institution, should have a major voice in communicating to their superiors the types of desired evaluation processes and methods. This input can help administrators see very clearly the relationship of library services in a school to the instructional program or the roles which children's and young adult librarians are playing in achieving the public library's goals.

A process of communication in which goals are determined, in which priorities among library functions are established, and in which performance measures (or quality indicators) are defined is essential. There is a real need for youth librarians to be evaluated in terms of their jobs and not on the basis of some particular conception of librarianship which may have little relationship to the actual job at hand. If performance is not going to be evaluated by your planning with teachers, there will likely be little payoff for spending the time, energy, and intelligence which that entails. On the other hand, if you minimize in advance the importance of the clerical and technical aspects of your program, then this conception of librarianship will not play as important a part in performance evaluation. So then, performance evaluation measures should be planned in advance, should be job specific, should be viewed positively, should be ongoing in the sense that they can be modified as program goals are modified, and should provide some indicators and measures for assessing the extent to which the librarian is meeting or exceeding expectations.

The process of performance evaluation should be based upon the most appropriate mix of methods for a given situation. Each librarian should work to make certain that the best data can be gathered to determine effectiveness and to indicate areas for improvement and growth. Methods which might be considered in determining the most appropriate mix are: establishing performance standards or competencies; establishing specific levels of acceptable performance on these criteria; supervisor observation of performance (here it is extremely important that a conference be held prior to the observation so that the supervisor will understand the purposes of the activities); supervisor review of performance; peer and client review of performance (in a school setting, important data for performance improvement can be gained by systematically gaining input from teachers and students); systematic self-assessment (it truly is renewing to have the opportunity to examine the extent to which personal and professional goals are being attained); and objective assessment of the degree of attainment of institutional goals.

Those in youth librarianship have available a multitude of instruments which recently have been developed to evaluate the performance of youth librarians. These can be of great assistance in the development of instruments for local use. A clever idea is to make adaptations of existing instruments since evaluation in the best sense is a local process to meet local goals.

Goal Setting for Youth Library Programs

One of the clearest ways for youth library services to be more visible and to communicate program excellence is through the intricate and

necessary process of the establishment of program goals. Without the direction of goals, it is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate programs in meaningful ways. In schools, the interactive process of working with students, faculty, and administrators helps ensure that library program goals are derived from school goals and that the program functions which flow from these goals are consistent with the curricular and instructional objectives of the school. A major benefit of this interactive involvement is that many schools report that library and information skills goals have become a part of the stated goals and priorities for the school.

In public libraries there are numerous methods for the establishment of goals for youth services which are congruent with the goals of the parent institution. The *Planning Process for Public Libraries* enables an individual institution to determine those goals and consequently the objectives which will give direction to library programs and to budget allocations. We need to begin to gather data on a national basis which will communicate the importance of youth services within libraries. Many public libraries, both voluntarily and as requirements for accreditation, are collecting and reporting output measures. There is considerable anecdotal evidence that youth services may account for large portions of the circulation per capita, turnover rate, attendance per capita, and registration per capita of the library's output measures. We should make a concerted effort in each library to determine the proportion which youth services contribute as a justification on the local level for staff, budgets, etc., and to make youth services even more visible to library staff and trustees. In the effort to help each child in the United States receive a public library card by the end of 1987, we can certainly see youth services expanding across the nation. Now is probably exactly the time to begin to measure and report our effectiveness and accomplishments. A joint effort among the youth divisions (YASD, AASL, and ALSC) of ALA should be undertaken to assist local libraries in gathering and reporting data regarding the current status of youth services.

In all libraries serving youth, a critical part of the evaluation process is to use measures which will gauge the satisfaction of users, actual and potential, with services and collections. An analysis of demographic data will indicate who our clients are. Measures need to be developed which will help determine penetration, or the use of the services by the user population; availability (why an available service is not being used or to determine why an unavailable desired service is not being made available); and determine the degree of satisfaction with the services of both users and staff.

Some cringe at the thought of measurement and reporting of services, feeling that some currently available measures are too primitive, mechanistic, or rudimentary to come close to conveying the quality of the human interactions in library services. Some librarians say that they simply do not

have the time to collect data in order to report measures of effectiveness. We appear, however, to be in an era when the gathering and reporting of data is so essential to the continued improvement of youth services that we simply must make time and make certain that the measures used do have meaning for us.

As indicated earlier, we have the responsibility for determining the goals and measures which are appropriate for our library. This also gives us the responsibility for measuring the extent to which those goals have been achieved or exceeded. When budget crunches come, we should not have to rely on the good graces of funding authorities, hoping that they nostalgically will remember children's services. It has become clear that in many school systems library services are among the first to be considered for cutbacks. We must now be prepared for interpreting and justifying current levels of funding and services and also be prepared for having realistic plans for program expansion. An essential element of this process is the identification of the audience to be served. The youth divisions of ALA have the opportunity and need to define by age who is a child, an early adolescent, and a young adult. In order to present, on a national level, a status report of youth services, we need to be able to define terms. If we do not, there will be scant comparability of data and the prospects are that youth services may suffer.

Measurement of Services—Some New Possibilities

The use of output measures has indeed become widely accepted in public libraries, and school library media specialists should develop measures which are meaningful for reporting progress in the library media program. The available output measures, as noted earlier, do not address some of the important elements of our programs, elements which merit more sophisticated methods of measurement. The extent to which the school library media specialist performs the instructional role, engages in the provision of access to students and collection evaluation, and the extent of promotion of materials through reading guidance are four areas which will serve as illustrations of where new measurement methods might be utilized.

Instructional Role Quotient

In school library media programs, we must demonstrate a high level of involvement in the instructional programs of schools. There is a real need to demonstrate to ourselves and to administrators that we are making the best possible uses of the collections and of our competence in instructional development. The personalization of instruction implies very strongly a

systematic approach to the decisions regarding the best learning alternatives for each student. In the past we have typically relied on reporting numbers of teachers with whom we have teamed, numbers of classes which have used the media center's collection, and percentages of students taught. These appear to be rudimentary in that we are penalized for that teacher who simply will not use materials other than a textbook and a chalkboard, and these measures do not allow for the varying amount of time involved in various levels of working with teachers. I have developed an Instructional Role Quotient which might help present a more accurate and more positive picture of what we are doing when working in this capacity. Also, after gathering baseline data, a quotient such as this might be used in establishing goals for improvement (see Figure 1).

$$\text{IRQ} = \frac{6a + 4b + 2c + d - e}{n}$$

- a* = planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction with teacher(s); teaching library media skills when appropriate; certainly correlating library media center materials with instructional objectives; may or may not include grading of student work; may or may not include local production of materials; may or may not include gathering resources from other information agencies; does include evaluating the effectiveness of the materials used.
- b* = provision of materials to meet instructional objectives after planning session(s) with teachers(s); faculty involvement in selection of titles for these objectives will count here. No evaluation of effectiveness of materials.
- c* = Provide guidance to students who come from a class requiring information, without planning with teacher(s).
- d* = Acquire and organize materials in the subject area.
- e* = Instructional materials are not available to support the unit.
- n* = Number of applicable units in the designated time period (NOTE: the time period is your decision; suggestions are a full year, semester, or grading period).

Figure 1. Instructional Role Quotient (IRQ)

This formula will give credit for the amount of work involved in planning with teachers and will not overly penalize for the teachers who do not use media center materials, even when the units are applicable. An example of the use of this formula follows:

$$\text{IRQ} = \frac{6a + 4b + 2c + d - e}{n}$$

$$\text{IRQ} = \frac{6(2) + 4(12) + 2(60) + 19 - 1}{80} = \frac{198}{80}$$

$$\text{IRQ} = 2.475$$

In the earlier example, there are eighty applicable units during the designated time period (n). In two (a) of the units, you work with the teacher in planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction. In twelve (b) you correlate materials with the objectives; in sixty (c) you work with students who need information; in nineteen (d) materials are available; and in one (e) there are no materials available. In this example, the IRQ is 2.475 on a scale of 6.000 to negative 1.000. Your goal then may be to maintain an IRQ of 2.475 or increase this quotient to a higher number.

Access Quotients

Many libraries report attendance figures, either average daily attendance or visits per capita, or other. These statistics do not reflect the purposes of use. Padding attendance figures with students who are simply attending a study hall and not using materials or using the library as a dating center are not the best ways of communicating access. "Purposes of use" is a concept which we must help administrators (and users) consider as priorities. The following Daily Access Quotient (DAQ) helps shed light on the activities which users pursue in our centers (see Figure 2).

In the twenty-day period (n), note that 950 students attended the media center, and the average daily attendance was 47.500. The earlier mentioned DAQ is best used for in-house measurement of use since it is influenced by the number of students in the school and other internal factors. A standardized figure would be to consider enrollment and could be presented as the per capita access quotient (PCAQ).

$$\text{PCAQ} = \frac{4x + 4y + 3z + a - sh}{s}$$

s = number of students

$$\text{PCAQ} = \frac{2750}{500}$$

$$\text{PCAQ} = 5.500$$

$$DAQ = \frac{4x + 4y + 3z + a - sh}{n}$$

- x = number of students you teach library-related content, either inside or outside the media center.
 y = number of students working on activities and with materials you have planned for specific instructional objectives (generally this would be in periods following instruction or introduction).
 z = number of students working independently in using library media center materials;
 a = number of students attending with no discernible purpose;
 sh = number of students assigned to the library media center for study hall;
 n = number of days.
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EXAMPLE:

$$DAQ = \frac{4x + 4y + 3z + a - sh}{n}$$

$$DAQ = \frac{4(200) + 4(200) + 3(300) + 250 - 0 = 2750}{2020}$$

$$DAQ = 137.500$$

Figure 2. Daily Access Quotient (DAQ)

Collection Evaluation Measures

In measurement and justification of library services, we often focus exclusively on inputs (e.g., twelve books/student) and have not done enough in measuring the effectiveness of collections. This becomes especially critical when proposing additional expenditures for materials. Using a clever combination of input and output measures can paint a clearer picture for funding bodies of how much “bang for the buck” we are getting from our rather high-cost collections.

David Loertscher has developed methods for collection “mapping” of general and specialized collections in terms of instructional objectives.

This is a means of telling us where the collections are strong and where they need more titles to meet adequately the instructional needs of students. School districts should use this mapping approach to determine the most appropriate statistics for determining exemplary collections as opposed to those making progress. Local assessment is essential here.

Public and school libraries should both be gathering data regarding in-house use of all collections. This is particularly important for reference collections, periodicals, vertical files, and other collections whose use is not reflected in circulation statistics. This is also particularly important for libraries serving the information needs of young adults.

In justifying any monies for materials, but most importantly for those high-cost items such as reference works, we should provide data regarding the cost per use. For example, if an encyclopedia set costs \$500, some may feel that the old outdated set will last another year. However, if it is known that each set receives approximately 2,000 uses per year, then the cost per use is only 25 cents. A means of justifying periodical subscriptions is also cost per use. If a periodical costs \$20 and the total uses of current and back issues is 200 in a year, then the cost per use of that periodical for that year is 10 cents. These figures should be readily available both for in-house and external reporting.

It is also becoming increasingly important to consider the concept of document delivery rate or "lag time" in providing information sources for children and young adults. Baseline data should be gathered and questions should be posed regarding the acceptability of the lag time and decisions made regarding steps to take to reduce this figure.

Reading Guidance Quotient

A function dear to all of us is providing guidance to users of the collections. An in-house measure to determine how well materials are promoted can be expressed as a Reading Guidance Quotient (see Figure 3).

In this example, fifty new titles were promoted using direct, specially designed direct and indirect methods for each title. No title went straight to the shelves. The range in this formula is 6.000 to negative 1.000.

The purpose of this presentation has been to reinforce the theme of the conference—managers and missionaries. I believe that youth services librarians are missionaries in the best definition of that term. If we can bolster fervor with measurement and evaluation data which justify our great faith and zeal, then we as managers of change can hopefully achieve the type of future sought for youth services. Cooperative efforts among the youth divisions of ALA, among library school educators, and among all librarians serving youth, regardless of type of library, can help us as a unified coalition bring about the scenarios established at this landmark conference.

$$RGQ = \frac{3d + 2sdi + id - sos}{n}$$

- d = number of titles promoted by DIRECT reading reading guidance techniques; e.g., booktalking, book discussion, individual referral (either oral or written), reviews in newspapers, cable TV exposure, etc.
- sdi = number of titles promoted by SPECIALLY DESIGNED INDIRECT techniques; e.g., pathfinders, "What to Read After You Read...", thematic bookmarks; thematic displays, etc.
- id = number of titles promoted by other INDIRECT techniques—e.g., display books, general listing of new arrivals, etc.
- sos = number of titles with no promotion (straight on shelves)
- n = number of possible titles (this will vary; you may be promoting one portion of the collection, or new arrivals, or...).

EXAMPLE:

$$RGQ = \frac{3d + 2sdi + id - sos}{n}$$

$$RGQ = \frac{3(50) + 2(50) + 50 - 0}{50} = \frac{300}{50}$$

$$RGQ = 6.000$$

Figure 3. Reading Guidance Quotient (RGQ)
